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THE SOUTHWESTERN FIELD

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In the Southwestern field our great purpose has been to arouse an irresistible public opinion for the establishment and maintenance of a system of schools adequate for the needs of a free people. When that is aroused, the thing is done, and the problem assumes another phase—the scientific phase.

The first achievement of this public opinion will be the appropriation of sufficient money for such schools. This money may be obtained by state appropriation, by local taxation and community effort, and by appropriation of unexpended balances by parish and county boards. A parallel achievement will be the consolidation of weak schools into strong central schools and the hauling of children to these central schools.

It is believed that better schoolhouses, the trained teacher and all other blessings will follow in the wake of these achievements. Much has been accomplished in these directions by devoted men in the southwestern field during the last twenty years, but each new generation must fight for its life and for the life of the generation to come.

The activities of the Southern Education Board during the past summer were expended upon summer schools at Lafayette and Lake Charles, La., and the general purposes of the board were understood and promulgated in the two schools at Monroe and Ruston. President Caldwell, of the State Normal School, and Superintendent Calhoun were intelligently fruitful and active throughout the whole state, and too much credit cannot be accorded them. Professors Dillard, Himes, Aswell and Showalter, in addition to their regular duties in these schools, made it their business to preach the need for greater educational facilities throughout the state. An intensive campaign was conducted in the parish of Calcasieu by Professor Himes, of the Louisiana State University. In this great parish,

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which contains a population of 35,000 people, thirty meetings were held and seventy addresses delivered. As a result of this activity, one ward voted outright a special tax of three mills and five others have voted the five-mill tax, amounting to a total of \$15,000. Perhaps the best result of this single parish campaign was the revelation to the whole state of the possibilities of this great work and the revelation to all the other parishes of the good that can come to them by co-operation with these boards.

The most notable events of the fall months in Louisiana were two great meetings, one for the white people and one for the negro people. The meeting of the parish superintendents of the state was held in New Orleans under the general direction of Dr. Wallace Buttrick, general agent of the General Education Board. It was attended by all of the superintendents of the state and was fruitful in practical suggestions and stimulation. The most distinct value of the meeting was the impulse given to the idea of consolidation of schools. Extensive consolidation has occurred in the parishes of Lafayette, Ascension, and Sabine, and it is proposed to consolidate eighteen districts in Iberia parish and to establish a central school from which no child will be distant more than ten miles.

The next great meeting was one for the colored race and was attended by the leading teachers and citizens of the negro race from all over the state. It was held in New Orleans in October and was under the general direction of Principal Booker T. Washington. The address of Principal Washington was characterized by his usual patriotic common sense and earnestness, and meant a good deal in the moulding of public opinion in the minds of the white race and fixing rational ideals in the minds of the colored race.

Conditions are now thoroughly promising for a fruitful campaign in the State of Louisiana. The movement is now a genuine, whole-hearted movement, and the next three months will be months of real achievement in this work. That this is so we are indebted to the governor of the state, in whose parish of Union a ten-mill tax has been voted, the state superintendent, Hon. J. V. Calhoun, and the leading educators in the colleges and schools of the state.

The central educational campaign committee, consisting of the governor of the state, W. W. Heard; the state superintendent, Hon. J. V. Calhoun; Colonel T. D. Boyd, president of Louisiana State University; President B. C. Caldwell, of the Louisiana State Nor-

mal College, and myself, have appointed Mr. William M. Steele, of the *Picayune*, as executive secretary of that committee. Twenty parishes, carefully selected, have been chosen as the immediate field, sixty-five citizens of Louisiana, including the governor, state superintendent, prominent teachers, state officers, eminent lawyers and business men, have accepted service as campaign speakers. Appointments have been made already at twenty-five points, and the state will have been covered during the summer. The prominent men of the localities concerned, parish school boards and committees of citizens are co-operating with the speakers and school officers.

The opening meetings of this campaign were held at Broussard and Carencro of April 5 and 11. The addresses were made by Governor Heard, President Caldwell, and Professor Fortier, who spoke in French, French being the language that gives them the impulse to vote more than English. These meetings were attended by 1,900 people. Nearly every one present signed a petition for a three-mill tax, and this means the undoubted success of the movement.

A call has been issued for a conference of the presidents of the parish boards of education and of the police juries, who are men of force and influence. This conference will meet in the early fall and it will be its purpose to urge that all the money available in the parish treasuries be invested in the education of the children.

Democracies are not in the habit of being carried in a chariot of enthusiasm to a height of civic perfection. The whole process is a toilsome one of convincing and persuading.

One of the principal difficulties met with in this field of work has been the obstacle presented by the Mississippi River. It costs Louisiana a million dollars a year to control the river in normal times. It will cost this year a million and a half in addition to this. This is a very grave difficulty indeed, which the lower valley of the Mississippi should be relieved of by the United States Government. It has been impossible to attempt anything practical in the river region this spring. Still I can say that it has not diminished the zeal of those people in educational matters. Indeed, it seems to have increased their interest in a way, as men are always more interested in vital things when they are in trouble.

Two great summer schools were held in Louisiana this summer, one at Monroe and one at New Iberia. The school at Monroe is a combination of the schools formerly held at Ruston and Monroe,

and has been generously helped by the General Education Board. The industrial plant of the Ruston Institute will be removed to Monroe and the industrial plant of the Southwestern Institute at Lafayette will be removed to New Iberia, it being intended thus to emphasize the industrial aspect of rural school education. President Aswell has general charge of the great summer school to be held at Monroe, and at both schools serious attention will be given to training of practical campaigners for the work in hand.

Recent communications from the state superintendents of Mississippi and Arkansas (Superintendents Whitfield and Hineman) enable me to say briefly that very genuine progress has taken place, under their wise direction, in both of those places in the last few months, and both of them are scenes of great activity in educational matters. In Mississippi a popular educational campaign was waged throughout all last summer with favorable results, eleven out of fourteen counties signifying their desire to increase the school tax. The average term of the rural school has been lengthened from six to eight months in the last two years. It is interesting to note that a leading issue in the gubernatorial election is the question of the improvement of the schools for all the people, white and black. There is to be a summer school at the University of Mississippi under the direction of Chancellor Fulton, at which, in addition to the several subjects taught, it will be sought to arouse a concerted effort to send out men to battle for the school the coming year, which is to be an election year.

The letter from Superintendent Hineman is of a most encouraging character. The state legislature of Arkansas passed bills for better systematizing of the schools and the elevation of their standards. An important and significant sign of increasing interest in education in Arkansas is the fact that the salary of the superintendent's office has been increased so that it ranks next to the governor's, which is a progressive thing to do. The proposition to raise the state tax from three to four mills failed by three votes. A bill providing for the State Normal School failed by a very small vote, but, as a measure of this sort had never before reached the third reading, I suppose this may be described as encouraging.

Wherever the community feels itself in a position to make a successful fight for better schools, a report of its intention is made to the secretary of our campaign committee, who immediately places

at the disposal of the local authorities whatever speeches are at our command, and thus it is believed that the strongest influences will be made to co-operate with local interests and purposes. The following brief summary will give some idea to this Conference of the result of educational activity in the parishes of the State of Louisiana for the past year. It is not intended to leave the impression that this activity is directly or indirectly the result of work done by the agencies of the Southern Education Board, for much of it is due to a deep-seated purpose on the part of the people out of their own thinking to establish their schools solidly and enduringly. The figures are not complete, for parish and county superintendents sometimes consider it a perquisite of their offices not to reply to requests for statistical information. I am indebted to the kindness of Superintendent Calhoun for the figures herein submitted.

There are fifty-eight parishes in Louisiana. In forty-eight of these parishes eighty-one new schoolhouses were built and these houses are of distinctly modern and effective type. In forty parishes from which replies were received, two hundred and thirty schoolhouses were repaired and refurnished. Increase of school income through local taxation has taken place in twenty-one parishes, amounting in money to \$75,000. The parish police juries have increased the amount of money for schools by appropriation in fourteen parishes, amounting in money to \$37,800. The state legislature increased the general amount of their appropriations by the sum of \$128,000. All this does not include the city of New Orleans, and the total amount is \$240,000. Campaigns are now under way in four great parishes, and in one, Cameron, it is proposed to increase the tax ten mills. I believe that there will be many other campaigns under way before the fall months.

I have no novel suggestions to make. The moulding of public opinion is a slow business, but it is splendid and renovating when it is moulded. The thing for us to do, therefore, is to hammer on until the desire for better schools, and all that belongs to better schools, becomes a contagion with the people.

It is perhaps proper for me to state that, as district director of the Southern Education Board, it has been my privilege to make thirty-five public addresses in the past year on the subject of education, twenty-six of them being in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, and nine in other states. The people of Louisiana are ready,

as I have said, for large action. Their leaders are enthusiastic and dead in earnest. Strengthened and stimulated by the healthfulness issuing from this Conference and from the Southern and General Education Boards, much lasting good will be done.